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BRIAN AZZARELLO
LEE BERMEJO

DC BLACK LABEL

LUTHOR

BRIAN AZZARELLO WRITER

LEE BERMEJO ARTIST

MICK GRAY KARL STORY JASON MARTIN ADDITIONAL INKS

DAVE STEWART JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA COLORS

PHIL BALSMAN PAT BROSSEAU ROB LEIGH NICK J. NAPOLITANO LETTERS

LEE BERMEJO COVER ART AND ORIGINAL SERIES COVERS

SUPERMAN CREATED BY JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE JERRY SIEGEL FAMILY

BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE WITH BILL FINGER

WILL DENNIS Editor – Original Series
CASEY SEIJAS Assistant Editor – Original Series
JEB WOODARD Group Editor – Collected Editions
SCOTT NYBAKKEN Editor – Collected Edition
STEVE COOK Design Director – Books
LOUIS PRANDI Publication Design
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LUTHOR

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DC Comics
2900 West Alameda Ave.
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SHE WILL STAND AS A **BEACON,** SHINING EVEN BRIGHTER THAN THE STAR THAT IS **MY METROPOLIS,** LIGHTING THE WAY FOR **MANKIND** EVERYWHERE.

A STAGGERING TRIBUTE TO OUR POTENTIAL.

AN UNDENIABLE EXAMPLE OF THE GREATNESS WE'RE CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING.

A SYMBOL I CAN TOUCH, THAT REPRESENTS THE DREAM THAT'S WITHIN US ALL.

OF THE HEIGHTS HUMANITY CAN ASPIRE TO...

AND THE DEPTHS OF HUMAN SACRIFICE...

...TO BE.

HOW YOU DOIN' TONIGHT, MR. LUTHOR?

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I SAID YOU CAN CALL ME *LEX*, STAN?

OH...ONCE OR HUNDRED, I DON' KNOW.

IT AIN'T EASY CALLIN' YOU LEX, MR. LUTHOR.

A *RESPECT* THING.

FAIR ENOUGH.

WHEN YOU GET A BILL, WHO'S IT ADDRESSED TO?

ME.

STANISLAW LEVIN.

I'M DOING VERY WELL TONIGHT, MR. LEVIN. AN' YOU?

CAN'T COMPLAIN, MR. LUTHOR.

CAN'T COMPLAIN.

THANKS.

SHE'S SURE GONNA BE *SOMETHIN'*, WHEN SHE'S DONE.

YES, SHE *WILL*.

LOOKIN' FORWARD TO IT, MIGHT EVEN TAKE MY KIDS ON OPENING DAY.

MY BOY--JOEY--HIS MOTHER TELLS ME HE DOES REALLY GOOD IN SCIENCE AT SCHOOL.

WHEN HE *GOES*.

A LITTLE *INCENTIVE*. IT'S A PERSONAL INVITATION TO BE MY GUEST FOR THE GRAND OPENING OF THE METROPOLIS *SCIENCE SPIRE*-- *IF* HE GETS AN "A" IN SCIENCE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS, MR. LUTHOR.

CUTS CLASS?

HE'S THIRTEEN.

HE CUTS CLASS.

GIVE HIM *THIS*.

CALL ME--

LEX...

...I'VE GOT TODAY'S PIGEON SATELLITE IMAGING DOWNLOADED AND REA--

I CAN FINISH UP LATER, MR. LUTHOR.

IT MIGHT BE A *LONG* NIGHT. THE CARPET CAN WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW.

WHERE'S YOUR REMOTE?

WHO KNOWS, MONA. AROUND.

RIGHT. Y'KNOW, YOU WANT LEXCORP TO MAKE MORE MONEY THAN GOD AND HIS TWO SISTERS, YOU INVENT A REMOTE WITH A PAGER LIKE A CORDLESS PHONE HAS.

THAT'S A GOOD IDEA. BUT WE'D NEED A BASE FOR THE REMOTE. MAYBE WE COULD BUILD THAT FUNCTION INTO THE MONITOR.

PUT IT UNDER THE SOFA CUSHION. IT'S THE FIRST PLACE ANYBODY THINKS TO LOOK.

TRUE, BUT IF WE CAN POSITION IT WHERE *WE* WANT IT TO BE, WE *CHANGE* EVERYONE'S WAY OF THINKING ABOUT IT.

WHICH SOMETIMES IS AS EASY TO *SAY*...

...AS IT IS TO *DO.*

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT FOR ME?

NOTHING OUT OF THE *ORDINARY.*

HE COMES OUT OF *NOWHERE,* YET SEEMS TO BE *EVERYWHERE* IN METROPOLIS AT ONCE.

EVEN WITH THE DIGITAL REWRITE IMPROVEMENTS MADE ON THE LENSES, WE STILL DON'T SEE MUCH MORE THAN A *BLUR.*

HE'S *NOT* A *MAN.*

HE'S BEEN HERE SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, AND IT'S STILL REALLY HARD TO BELIEVE...NOT JUST THAT A *MAN* CAN *FLY,* BUT THAT HE CAN FLY THAT FAST.

AND YOU WERE A *LITTLE GIRL* ONCE?

UPON A TIME.

DID YOU WANT TO *MARRY* HIM?

EXCUSE ME?

DID YOU WANT TO MARRY HIM? A CHILDHOOD FANTASY, LIKE PRINCE CHARMING.

I SUPPOSE SO-- EVERY LITTLE GIRL DOES. AND EVERY LITTLE BOY WANTS TO *BE* HIM.

YEAH. THAT'S WHAT MAKES HIM SO *DANGEROUS.*

DANGEROUS? I DON'T THINK SO.

I DO.

I *KNOW.* BUT LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT *DANGEROUS,* AND *FANTASY.*

ALL RIGHT.

NOTHING *HEATS* A WOMAN UP MORE THAN THE FIRE IN A *BAD BOY'S* EYES...

...IT'S AN *OVEN,* CURING HER HEART. TURNING IT FROM SOFT CLAY INTO FRAGILE PORCELAIN...

...SO IT CAN BE *BROKEN.* AND THAT'S THE *DANGER.*

AND *HE'LL* NEVER BREAK YOUR HEART?

HE *CAN'T.* HE'S *SUPER...*

...NOT A *MAN.*

NO, HE ISN'T. AND YOU, BY THE WAY, YOU CERTAINLY ARE DRESSED TO *CATCH* ONE.

SWEET OF YOU TO NOTICE, BUT IT'S JUST A LITTLE DÉCOLLETAGE FOR STUFFED SHIRTS AND SENSIBLE SHOES.

THE VON RAUCH ACADEMY'S BENEFIT BALL IS TONIGHT.

I'M GOING TO PRESENT YOUR ***VERY GENEROUS*** ANNUAL DONATION, AND TELL THEM THAT THOUGH YOU WOULD HAVE LOVED TO BE THERE, SOME MATTERS CAME UP AND--

--Hmm. THAT'S THAT ***EXCLUSIVE*** SCHOOL, ISN'T IT?

WELL, IF YOU MEAN BY EXCLUSIVE IT HAND-PICKS ONLY TWELVE STUDENTS FOR ACCEPTANCE EACH YEAR, THEN YES, IT'S ***EXCLUSIVE***.

I WILL, BUT NEXT SEMESTER'S CLASS HAS ALREADY BEEN SELECTED. ONE OF THOSE CHILDREN WOULD HAVE TO BE--

--A ***PERSONAL FAVOR***, AND I WOULD BE ***VERY GRATEFUL***.

RIGHT...AN EMPLOYEE OF OURS HAS A SON WHO I THINK MERITS ***INCLUSION*** IN THAT TWELVE.

JOEY'S A BRIGHT BOY. TELL THE HEAD MASTER I'D CONSIDER IT A ***PERSONAL*** FAVOR.

HAVE A GOOD TIME, MONA. GIVE EVERYONE MY BEST.

NOT A MAN.

NOT EVEN CLOSE.

YET MOST ACCEPT HIM LIKE A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY. GROWN-UP LITTLE GIRLS AND BOYS, CERTAIN THAT THE UNCERTAIN WILL BULLY THEM, FIND COMFORT IN THEIR...

...BIG BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET.

OPEN

HE'S MADE HIMSELF APPEAR SO MUCH **LIKE** US HE HAS **ALMOST** EVERYONE FORGETTING HE'S **NOT** ONE OF US.

ALMOST.

B-DRING B-DRING

B-DRING B-DR-

TELL ME SOMETHING.

MR. LUTHOR? IT'S ORR.

MR. ORR. GOOD NEWS, I TRUST?

YES SIR...

...DOCTOR FEDEROV WAS KIDNAPPED LAST NIGHT BY AL HASBALLAH.

THAT'S NOT GOOD NEWS, MR. ORR.

NO, BUT YOUR INTELLIGENCE WAS SPOT ON THE PONY. WE WERE ABLE TO INTERCEPT THEM BEFORE THEY GOT THE DOCTOR OUT OF CHECHNYA.

WE? I HIRED YOU...

AN' I WASN'T ABOUT TO DO THIS ALONE. THEY'RE LOCAL--DON'T WORRY, IT WON'T COST YOU ANYTHING.

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM.

CLICK

PLEASE SEE THAT YOU DO. AND THE DOCTOR?

HE'S FINE.

I'D LIKE HIM TO TELL ME THAT.

DOCTOR...

YES?

SASHA? IT'S LEX LUTHOR.

LEX? ARE *YOU* BEHIND THIS?

YOU CAN *THANK ME* LATER.

THERE'LL *BE* A LATER, THANKS TO YOU.

SASHA...

...I KNOW YOU SAID YOU PREFERRED TO RETIRE AND FARM, BUT DO YOU BELIEVE THAT'S AN *OPTION* ANYMORE?

YOUR NAME IS OUT THERE, AND *DANGEROUS* MEN ARE AFTER WHAT'S *IN* YOUR HEAD.

IT SEEMS THEY ARE MORE THAN WILLING TO *BREAK IT OPEN,* IF NEED BE.

ARE *YOU* ALL RIGHT?

I'M *AFRAID.*

DON'T BE. MR. ORR IS LIKE YOU--*VERY GOOD* AT HIS JOB. HE'S GOING TO TAKE YOU TO YOUR *HOME*.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

I CAN'T STAY THERE *NOW*.

THEN TELL HIM WHERE YOU WANT TO GO.

WILL I BE SAFE IN METROPOLIS?

YES. AND SO WILL YOUR FAMILY.

YOU HAVE *MY WORD*, SASHA.

OKAY.

LEX?

YES?

I WOULD LIKE, FOR A CHANGE, FOR MY RESEARCH TO BE USED FOR THE *BETTERMENT* OF MANKIND.

YOU HAVE *MY WORD* ON *THAT* AS WELL.

DOCTOR...

...WE'LL BE OUTTA HERE IN A COUPLE TICKS. FIRST I'VE GOT TO *TAKE CARE* OF OUR *FRIENDS.*

FRIENDS?

THE MEN THAT HELPED ME FREE YOU. RECOGNIZE ANY OF THEM?

COUPLE ARE FORMER KGB-- *THEY* KNOW *YOU.*

NOW THEY'RE GANGSTERS.

BAD MEN.

SURE...

...BUT *GOOD* GUYS.

YOU'VE BEEN REFERRED TO BY SOME AS THE WORLD'S GREATEST BOY SCOUT...

...FIGHTING FOR **TRUTH, JUSTICE,** AND THE **AMERICAN WAY.**

AS IF THAT WERE SOME INSEPARABLE, **HOLY TRINITY.**

TRUTH? THAT'S IN THE **TELLER.** JUST CALMLY MESSAGED WORDS THAT VERY WELL MAY BE NOTHING BUT CAREFULLY FINESSED **LIES.**

JUSTICE? BELONGS TO THE **JUDGE,** WHO SITS ABOVE THOSE WHO PUT HIM THERE BECAUSE THEY CAN'T TRUST **THEMSELVES.**

AND THE **AMERICAN WAY?** IT CONSTANTLY EVOLVES OUT OF SOMETHING THAT PROVES TO BE TRUE **AND** A LIE, JUST AND MORE...

...ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.

ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.

ALL MEN.

YOU ARE NOT A MAN...

BEEP

BUT THEY'VE MADE YOU THEIR *HERO...*

...AND THEY *WORSHIP* YOU.

SO TELL ME...

...WHAT *REDEMPTION* DO YOU *OFFER* THEM?

THOSE **RED** EYES, I'M SURE THEY LOOK RIGHT **THROUGH** ME, LIKE I AM NOTHING MORE THAN A **NUISANCE**. BUT WHEN I SEE YOU?

I SEE SOMETHING NO MAN CAN **EVER BE.**

I SEE **THE END.**

THE **END** OF OUR **POTENTIAL.**

THE **END** OF OUR **ACHIEVEMENTS.**

THE **END** OF OUR **DREAMS.**

YOU ARE MY **NIGHTMARE.**

BUT EVEN STARING AT YOU--THE *ABYSS*--I AM *NOT AFRAID.*

TRUST ME--I'M *NOT.* BECAUSE WHATEVER *YOU* HAVE?

I HAVE *MORE...*

I HAVE *HOPE.*

A *LIFE*, SOME WOULD ARGUE, IS A SERIES OF *PROBLEMS*.

THERE'S NO DENYING THE *TRUTH* IN THAT-- BUT WHY GET *LOST* IN IT? WHY NOT *RISE ABOVE* THE TRUTH...

...AND LEAD A *GOOD* LIFE?

SHOULDN'T WE ALL LOOK AT *PROBLEMS* AS A *CHANCE* FOR US TO FIND...

...*SOLUTIONS?*

...WE'RE *ON* SCHEDULE, BUT *OVER* BUDGET.

GOOD NEWS, *BAD* NEWS. WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THE *LATTER?*

THAT'S A TRICKY ONE. THE UNIONS HAVE US BY THE *STONES,* AS FAR AS CONTRACTS GO.

HOW *FAR* IS THAT?

AAAH, I DON'T FOLLOW YOU.

THE UNION CONTRACTS WE'VE SIGNED--THEY'RE ONLY FOR CON-STRUCTION, NO?

WE'RE STILL NEGOTIATING THE SERVICE END FOR ONCE THE SPIRE OPENS.

SO THEY GO AS *FAR* AS OPENING DAY. WHAT IF WE WERE TO OPEN THE SCIENCE SPIRE AS A *NOT-FOR-PROFIT* INSTITUTION?

YOU MEAN *CUT* THE UNIONS OUT ONCE WE'RE UP AND RUNNING? THAT WOULD TAKE SOME DOING. WE'D HAVE TO GET GOVERNMENTAL APPROVAL, AND TAKE OUR CURRENT BUSINESS PLAN OFF THE TABLE.

DONE.

HOLD ON A SECOND, LEX. YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT *MILLIONS* OF DOLLARS HERE...

EXACTLY.

LET OUR UNION REP KNOW.

HAVE A *PROFITABLE* DAY, GENTLE-MEN.

YOU'RE TAKING ON A REAL *HARD BALLER* HERE, LEX.

AM I. MONA?

TONY AMONTE DOESN'T PLAY *GAMES*. HE CAME UP THROUGH THE UNION THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY, WHICH MEANS HE WON'T BACK DOWN OR RENEGOTIATE THE CON--

AMONTE WILL DO WHAT'S *BEST* FOR THE UNIONS--THAT'S HIS *JOB*.

OKAY, BUT WHAT YOU'RE ASKING FOR *ISN'T* BEST FOR THE UNIONS...

...OR LEXCORP.

WHAT I'M *EXPECTING* IS THAT HE DOES HIS *JOB*.

IN THE LONG RUN, THAT'LL BE *BEST* FOR *EVERY-ONE*.

GOOD MORNING, SASHA.

LEX! HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

BUSY.

IS THAT *GOOD* OR *BAD*?

IT'S AN *EXCUSE.*

HOW'S YOUR PATIENT?

MINE? NO. *OURS* IS...

...INCREDIBLE.

STUNNINGLY SO.

CAN I *SPEAK* WITH HER?

CERTAINLY. GIVE ME JUST ONE SECOND...

GO AHEAD.

IT'S LEX.

LEX. *WHAT* ARE YOU *THINKING* ABOUT?

I'M THINKING ABOUT *YOU.*

WHAT ARE *YOU* THINKING ABOUT?

I'M...

...WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT *ME?*

HOW IMPORTANT YOU ARE.

AM I?

VERY MUCH SO. EVERY TIME I SEE YOU, I'M OVER-WHELMED.

YOU SHOULD SEE ME MORE OFTEN, THEN.

I'M...

BUSY.

HOW IS DOCTOR FEDEROV TREATING YOU?

HE'S MAKING ME BETTER.

I PROMISED YOU HE WOULD.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

HOW DO YOU THINK?

I'LL TALK TO YOU TO-MORROW.

SO...

...SOMEONE'S GOT A CRUSH HERE.

WHO DO YOU MEAN, MONA?

SASHA?

I'VE DONE WHAT I CAN. THE REST IS IN--

DON'T SAY GOD'S HANDS.

I'M NOT THAT KIND OF DREAMER.

I WAS GOING TO SAY YOURS.

YOU CALL HER MY PATIENT...

I'M NOT THE KIND OF DOCTOR WITH PATIENTS, LEX.

AND I'M NOT THE KIND OF MAN KNOWN FOR HIS, SASHA.

SHE ASKS SO MANY QUESTIONS.

SHE RESPONDS WITH THEM. THAT'S GOOD...

BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH. SOMETHING'S MISSING. SYNAPSES...

"WHAT'S INSIDE...YOU WISH FOR A PAST BUT THERE'S NONE FOR HER OUTSIDE THIS BUBBLE.

"WHAT YOU WANT REQUIRES..."

...MORE.

THEN I'LL *GET* IT FOR YOU.

I THOUGHT YOU HAD *EVERY-THING.*

YOU *IMAGINED* I DID, SASHA. AND *IMAGE...*

...IS *NEVER* EVERYTHING.

SOLUTIONS ARE NOT EASY TO COME BY. THEY DON'T PRESENT THEMSELVES, NEATLY WRAPPED IN COLORFUL PAPER.

LIKE ANY THING OF VALUE, THEY HAVE TO BE DUG FOR, SOMETIMES IN THE HARDEST GROUND TO BREAK...

...ONE'S OWN **HUMAN CLAY.**

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, MINING ONE'S SELF LEADS TO **FOOL'S GOLD,** UNLESS THE PICK IS TAKEN TO ONE'S **PRIDE.** ONE MUST BREAK OFF A CHUNK, AND SWALLOW IT...

...A **BITTER** PILL, FOR A **BETTER** TOMORROW.

I'LL BE GETTING IN LATE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO MEET ME.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO. BUT DINNER SOUNDS NICE. AND IT'S **JUST** DINNER, RIGHT?

I MEAN YOU HAVE A **REPUTATION.**

NO **SURPRISES,** OKAY?

GREAT. I'LL SEE YOU THEN.
CLICK
WE GOT A *NO-GO* WITH AMONTE.
LET ME KNOW WHAT THAT *MEANS*.
NO TO SECOND SHIFTS WITHOUT OVERTIME.
NO TO ANY NEW HIRES WORKING THOSE SHIFTS.
AND *YES* TO A WORK STOPPAGE IF WE GO NOT-FOR-PROFIT.
SO HE DOESN'T WANT TO PLAY FAIR.
HE DOESN'T *HAVE* TO. HE HAS A *CONTRACT*.
SO DO I.
AND *NOT JUST* WITH HIM.

THIS CAN'T WAIT?

IT *CAN*, BUT *WHY* LET IT?

DON'T WORRY, MONA. I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW NIGHT.

DON'T *WORRY?* YOU'RE LEAVING METROPOLIS WITH A LOT OF IMPORTANT THINGS UP IN THE *AIR* RIGHT NOW.

WELL I'M ABOUT TO *JOIN* THEM. AND I HAVE A FEELING, BY THE TIME I TOUCH DOWN TOMORROW NIGHT, THEY'LL *ALL* BE WITH ME.

SINCE WHEN DO *YOU* HAVE *FEELINGS?*

I'VE GOT *FEELINGS,* MONA. I JUST KEEP THEM *HIDDEN,* IS ALL.

RIGHT NEXT TO ALL THE *ACES* UP YOUR SLEEVE?

BETTER *UNDER* THE SLEEVE THAN *ON* IT.

I'VE MADE IT MY **BUSINESS** TO SEE THIS CITY FROM **EVERY** POSSIBLE ANGLE.

SO I'D **KNOW** IT LIKE THE BACK OF MY HAND.

AND IT'S IRONIC THAT METROPOLIS NEVER LOOKS MORE MAGNIFICENT TO ME...

...THAN WHEN I SEE IT FROM **HIS** ANGLE.

BUT DOES **HE** SEE WHAT **I** SEE? DOES HE SEE THE FINEST EXAMPLE OF WHAT **HUMANITY** CAN ACCOMPLISH, REACHING FOR THE SKY?

DOES HE SEE A CITY THAT LIVES UP TO ITS **PAST** WHILE DEFINING ITS **FUTURE?**

DOES HE SEE THE **GREATEST** CITY ON THE PLANET?

OR DOES HE MERELY LOOK **DOWN** ON IT?

WHATEVER I CAN DO TO HELP YOU *NAIL* LEX LUTHOR, YOU GOT IT AND AN EXTRA YARD.

THE DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES YOUR CO-OPERATION, MR. AMONTE. AS I TOLD YOU, THE ALLEGATIONS ARE *SERIOUS*.

THAT *FAT CAT* DON'T JUST WANT TO CUT US OUT OF OUR DUE, BUT HE'S GIVING US SUB-STANDARD TOOLS TO DO OUR JOB? MAN, IF *THAT* DON'T *TAKE* THE CAKE.

AND *EAT* IT TOO.

HUH?

OH, I GET IT.

HERE WE ARE. YOU WATCH YOUR *STEP*, OKAY?

SO SHOULD YOU.

ME? DON'T LET THE SUIT FOOL YOU-- I'M A STEEL MONKEY. THERE AIN'T A HIGH-RISE BUILT THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN METROPOLIS DON'T HAVE A RIVET WITH MY FINGERPRINTS ON IT.

SO WHY'D YOU GET INVOLVED IN UNION ADMINI-STRATION?

WELL, I WON'T SAY IT'S EASIER-- OR MORE PERSONALLY REWARDING--BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT LOOKING OUT FOR SOMEBODY ELSE, KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

IN MY LINE OF WORK? YEAH, I DO.

I LIKE TO SAY, I STARTED UP HERE--AT THE TOP--AND WORKED MY WAY DOWN.

THAT'S A LONG WAY TO GO.

YOU HAVE KIDS?

SURE DO. TWO DAUGHTERS.

WHACK

UHUH

WELL, THE *TOOLS* CHECK OUT. NO PROBLEM...

...THERE. BUT, YOU... THAT PROPOSAL YOU REJECTED TODAY...

...I'D LIKE YOU TO *RECONSIDER* IT.

NOW, I'M NOT SAYING YOU SHOULD DO THIS TO LOOK OUT FOR *YOURSELF*--THOUGH I CAN'T IMAGINE YOU'D BE THINKING ABOUT ANYONE ELSE IN A SITUATION LIKE WE HAVE HERE.

I WON'T *SCREW* MY MEN...

I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO...

BUT I'M TELLING YOU *I WILL SCREW...*

...PATTY AND EMILY. AND WHEN I'M *DONE...*

WE'LL BE LANDING SHORTLY, MR. LUTHOR. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN GET YOU?

NO, THANK YOU MARLENE.

WELL THEN I'M GONNA GO *STRAP* IN.

...*SOMETHING* I SHOULD KNOW?

NAH, I JUST HATE FLYING INTO THIS AIRPORT. THE APPROACH IS SO *SEVERE,* IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE BEING *SUCKED* INTO THIS CITY.

BD-DEED BD-DEED

MR. ORR...

I HAVE SOME *GOOD NEWS* FOR YOU.

I COULD *USE* SOME...

I'LL *RENEGOTIATE* THE CONTRACTS.

MR. AMONTE? I APPRECIATE THAT, VERY MUCH. PERHAPS WE CAN DO SOMETHING ON THE BACK END, MAKE THINGS UP TO YOUR PEOPLE.

OF COURSE. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SENSITIVE TO THE UNIONS.

BUT SOME OF THE *UNFORESEEN COSTS* WE'VE EXPERIENCED WITH THE SPIRE'S CONSTRUCTION...

THAT WOULD BE...WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS?

...YOU *UNDERSTAND MY POSITION?*

SURE, MR. LUTHOR...

...YOU UNDERSTAND MINE?

SOLUTIONS.

ONE DOWN...

LEX!

ONE TO GO.

WELCOME TO GOTHAM CITY.

ALWAYS GOOD TO SEE YOU, BRUCE.

I MUST SAY, I DID ENJOY OUR AFTERNOON TOGETHER, MR. LUTHOR.

AS DID I, ALFRED. YOU'VE BEEN A VERY GRACIOUS *TOUR* GUIDE.

YES, WELL, I APOLOGIZE FOR MASTER BRUCE'S--

--THANK YOU, BUT *DON'T*. HE *IS* WHO HE *IS*...

...AND HE'S *LUCKY* TO HAVE YOU.

HOW LONG'S YOUR CONTRACT, ANYWAY?

I'M FLATTERED, MR. LUTHOR, BUT--

--YOU'RE MORE *LOYAL* THAN *FLATTERED*. I *RESPECT* THAT.

AND ALFRED? *RESPECT* IS SOMETHING THAT'S *EARNED*...

BORN TO *GREATNESS* IS A *LIE.*

AND *FATE* WAS INVENTED BY *COWARDS.* BUT *DESTINY...*

...IS SOMETHING WE *HOLD* IN OUR HANDS.

Gotham Gazette

★★★ TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2004 ★★★ 35¢ ★★★

BATMAN NABS KIDNAPPERS!

LEX! HOW *ARE* YOU THIS MORNING?

I'M FINE, BRUCE. AND IT'S NEARLY *ONE.*

AM I *LATE?* I TOLD ALFRED--

YOU'RE A FEW MINUTES *EARLY.*

THAT'S ALFRED FOR YOU! HE--BY THE WAY-- IS AT YOUR DISPOSAL FOR THE REST OF THE DAY. I'M SORRY I HAD TO CUT DINNER SHORT LAST NIGHT. I TRUST MORIMOTO TREATED YOU--

--IT WAS ONE OF THE *BEST* MEALS I'VE EVER HAD.

LOOKS LIKE *YOUR DESSERT* GOT THE BEST OF YOU, THOUGH...

WELL, DESSERT'S SOMETIMES BEST SERVED A LITTLE *ROUGH,* N'EST-CE PAS?

HELLO, MR. WAYNE.

GREGORY! WHAT'S COOKING?

THIS IS LEX LUTHOR. LEX, GREGORY IS ONE OF THE TOP CHEFS IN GOTHAM...

MY PLEASURE, MR. LUTHOR.

IF I MAY RECOMMEND, TODAY I'VE PREPARED--

DO YOU MIND, LEX?

MENU

IT'S *YOUR* TOWN.

IT *IS*, ISN'T IT?

GREG, BRING US A COUPLE STRIPS, ABOUT A POUND AND A QUARTER EACH. MEDIUM RARE--ON THE RARE SIDE. A WET, RIPE, BEEFSTEAK TOMATO SALAD, WITH VERY THINLY SLICED RED ONION. DRESS IT WITH EXTRA VIRGIN--

--LIKE THERE IS SUCH A THING!--

--AND MALDON SALT.

WOULD YOU LIKE A POTATO, LEX, OR HAVE YOU...

...NO, I'VE *BOUGHT* INTO THAT.

GOOD FOR YOU.

ON THE SIDE... A BIT OF MAYTAG BLUE CHEESE, AND...

WE'RE DRINKING RED, RIGHT?

SPARKLING WATER.

YOU *HEARD* THE MAN.

THANK YOU, MR. WAYNE.

GREGORY-- BRING ME JUST A GLASS OF CABERNET. '91 MONTE BELLO.

NO WINE, LEX?

I'VE GOT SOME THINGS TO TALK ABOUT, BRUCE.

EXACTLY. AND THAT'S SO MUCH *EASIER* TO DO WHEN WINE'S INVITED TO THE TABLE.

GREGORY-- THE BOTTLE--AND *TWO* GLASSES!

I *WANT* TO *LIKE* BRUCE WAYNE...

AND IT'S NOT JUST BECAUSE HE MAY GO OUT OF HIS WAY TO TRY TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT I *DON'T*...

OR THAT HE *RELISHES* A PART OF LIFE I'M... *UNCOMFORTABLE* WITH.

HE CONVEYS...*ANIMAL MAGNETISM.* MAYBE I'M JEALOUS OF THAT...

...OR MAYBE, LIKE SO MANY, I'M *DRAWN* TO IT. I DON'T KNOW.

I'M NOT EVEN SURE IT'S *REAL,* OR PART OF HIS "MILLIONAIRE PLAYBOY" *FACADE.*

BUT ONE THING'S CLEAR ABOUT BRUCE. BEYOND THE MASK HE WEARS...

...IS HIS *PASSION.*

A *PALPABLE* THING, THAT'S *ALMOST* GREATER THAN THE MAN HIMSELF.

AND IF THERE'S *PASSION...*

THERE'S *DESIRE.*

AND *DESIRE* MEANS THERE'S A *HOLE* IN THE MAN.

I WONDER, NOT JUST *WHAT* THAT HOLE IS...

...BUT *HOW DEEP* IT IS.

AND IF *I* HAVE THE MEANS TO *FILL* IT.

SO LEX, WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

WE HAVE A PROJECT AT LEXCORP THAT, FRANKLY...

...WE NEED WAYNE INDUSTRIES' HELP WITH.

JOINT VENTURE?

NO. PROPRIETARY TECHNOLOGY. NOTHING COMMERCIAL.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A *NO GO*, LEX. BUT GO ON.

I HEARD THOMAS LABS HAS MADE A FAIRLY SHATTERING BREAKTHROUGH ON THE ALZHEIMER'S FRONT...

IT DOESN'T *GROW HAIR*, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.

...I THINK IT COULD BE BENEFICIAL ON ANOTHER.

LET'S JUST SAY I WERE TO SAY YES. WHAT'S IT *WORTH* TO YOU, AND MORE IMPORTANT, WHAT'S IT *FOR?*

IT'S *WORTH* THE *WORLD*, BECAUSE *THAT'S* WHAT IT'S FOR.

COULD YOU MAKE THINGS A BIT MORE *OPAQUE* FOR ME?

I'M BEING VERY *CLEAR* HERE.

OH.

MY MISTAKE, I THOUGHT WE WERE TALKING BUSINESS...

...NOT TILTING AT *WINDMILLS.*

"THE *DRAGON IS* REAL, BRUCE. I'VE STOOD *NEXT* TO IT. HELL-- I'VE STOOD *UP* TO IT..."

"...CAN YOU SAY THE SAME?"

"I'VE...NEVER MET HIM."

"YOU DON'T MEET *IT*--IT MEETS *YOU*. HEAD ON, AND IT BUCKLES YOUR KNEES, LIKE A FORCE OF NATURE--

"--BUT IT ISN'T *NATURAL*."

""IT" HAS A NAME, LEX--"

"--THAT *WE* GAVE HIM, AN ATTEMPT TO HUMANIZE HIM--AS POINTLESS AS NAMING A HURRICANE.

"FORGET THE NAME, BRUCE..."

"AND THINK ABOUT WHAT HE CAN *DO*...

"...THINK ABOUT A *HURRICANE* WITH A *WILL*.

"THEN *MULTIPLY* THAT INTENSITY A *THOUSAND*-FOLD."

THAT'S SOME STORM.

GOOD THING HE'S ON *OUR* SIDE.

WHAT IF HE *CHANGES* HIS MIND?

WHAT IF...TONIGHT--HE LOOKS DOWN AT US AND *DECIDES* WE'RE *NOT CAPABLE* TO MANIFEST OUR OWN DESTINY?

WHAT IF TOMORROW HE WAKES UP BELIEVING HE KNOWS WHAT'S *BEST* FOR US?

THAT IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO *PROTECT* THE WORLD...

...WHEN HE CAN *RULE* IT?

THE ONLY *SAFEGUARD* WE HAVE AGAINST THAT HAPPENING...

...IS HIS *WORD.*

AND I SAY--HIS WORD--IS NOT ENOUGH. EVEN IF YOU BELIEVE IT, DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO ACCEPT IT?

WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE?

THAT'S THE WRONG QUESTION. WHAT YOU SHOULD BE ASKING...

IS WHAT CAN WE CHOOSE TO DO ABOUT IT?

WHAT'S THIS, LEX? YOU'RE NOT ABOUT TO POP--

--IT'S KRYPTONITE.

YOU'RE OFFERING ME THIS IN EXCHANGE...?

I'M GIVING IT TO YOU WITH *NO STRINGS.*

EVEN IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO SHARE THOMAS LABS' RESEARCH. YOU SHOULD HAVE IT...

THE *PERFECT GIFT* FOR THE MAN WHO HAS *EVERY-THING...*

EXCEPT A *CARE* IN THE WORLD.

I CAN AFFORD *NOT* TO.

NO YOU *CAN'T.*

NONE OF US CAN...

"YOU'LL *NEVER* BRING HIM *DOWN,* LEX."

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN BRINGING *HIM DOWN...*

...BUT *OBSESSED* WITH BRINGING *US UP.*

ALL OF US--*EVERYONE*-- DESERVES A CHANCE AT *GREATNESS.*

ALL THAT TAKES IS THE *BELIEF* THAT IT *EXISTS.*

BUT *HIS* EXISTENCE THREATENS NOT JUST THAT *BELIEF*...

WUNK

SHREEK

CRASH

...BUT OUR *EXISTENCE*.

I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING INHERENTLY DANGEROUS WHEN SOMETHING *REAL* BECOMES *MYTHIC*.

I BELIEVE WHEN THAT HAPPENS, WE LOSE THE PART OF OURSELVES THAT *YEARNS* TO BE *GREAT.*

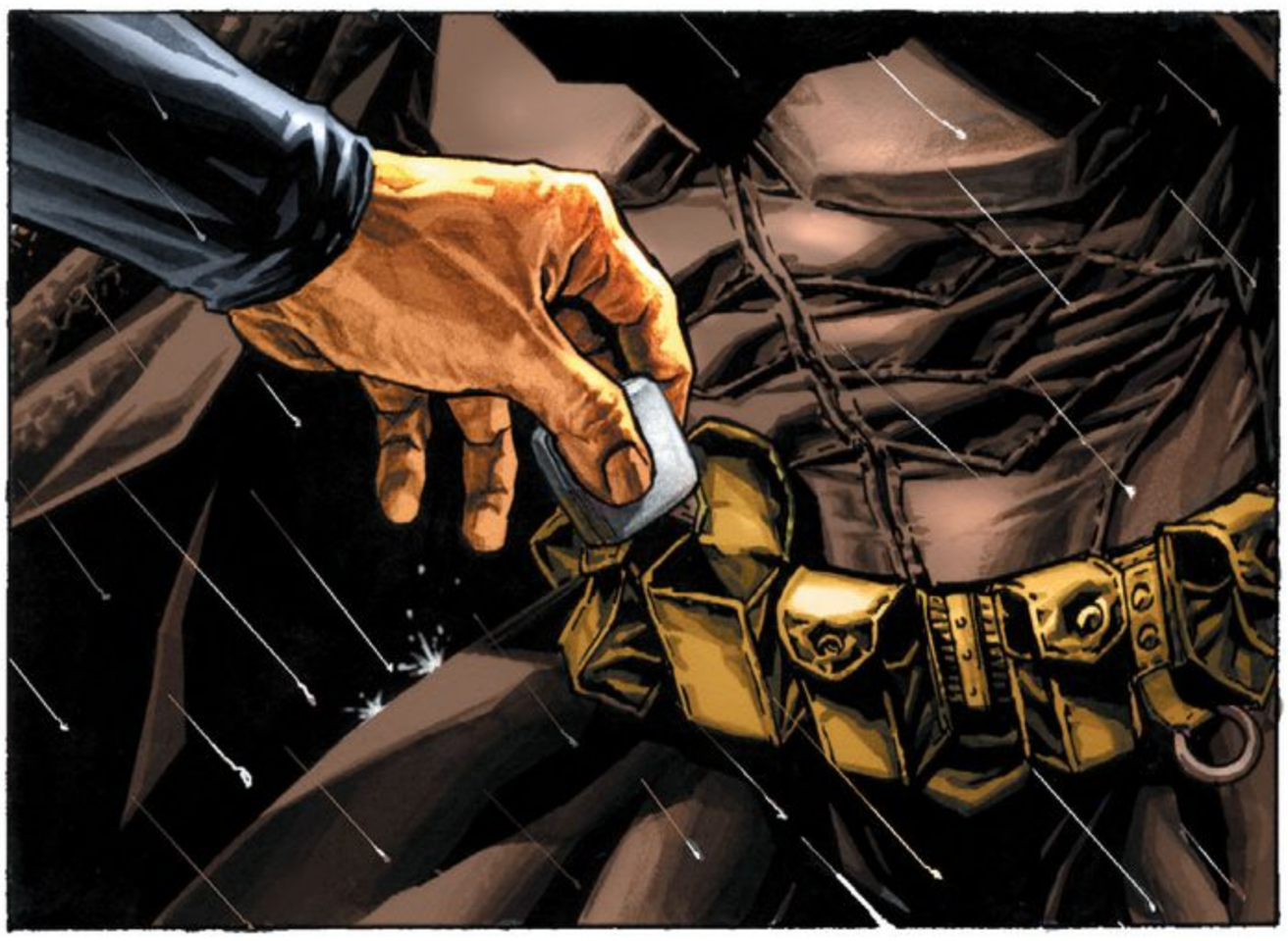
BECAUSE WHEN FACED WITH A *MYTH?*

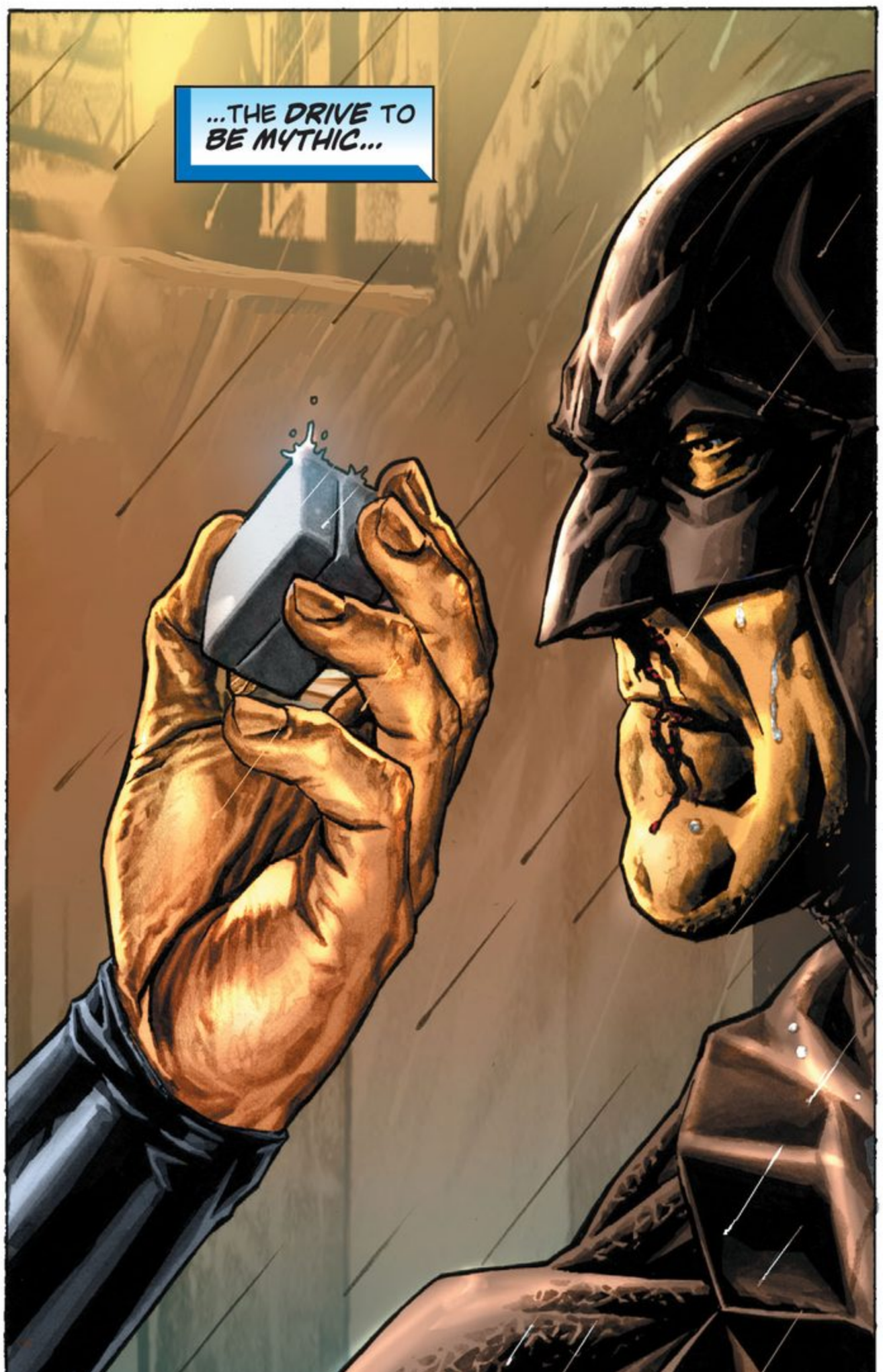
WE CAN'T WIN.

SO THE MYTHIC MUST BE EXPOSED FOR WHAT IT IS.

SO WE CAN BELIEVE IN OURSELVES.

BECAUSE IT'S ONLY WHAT'S IN US...

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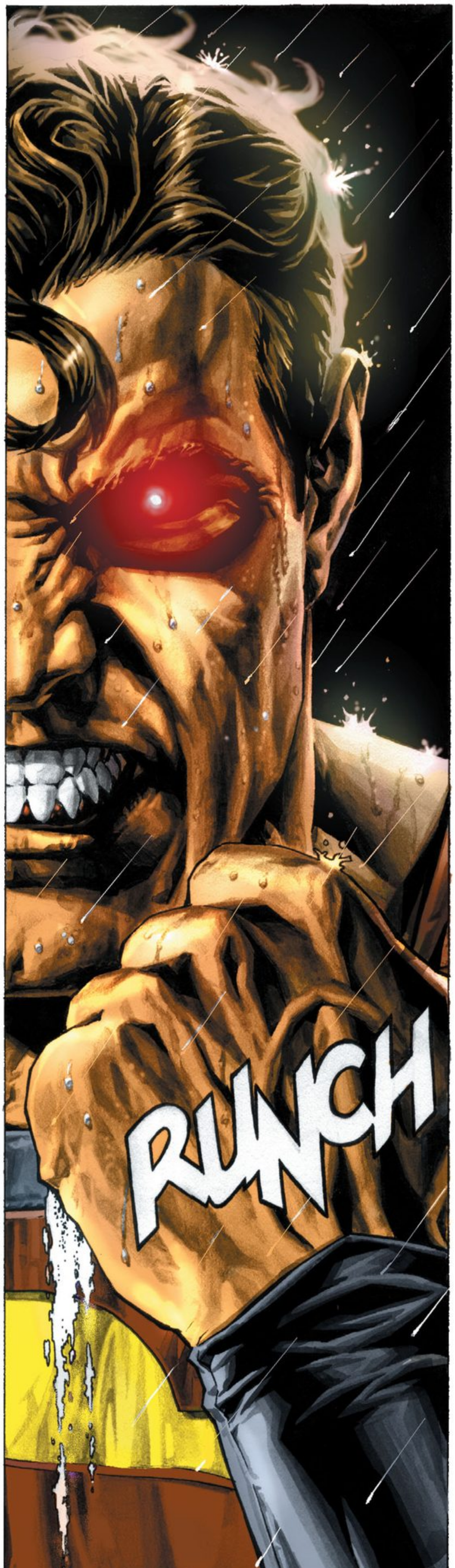
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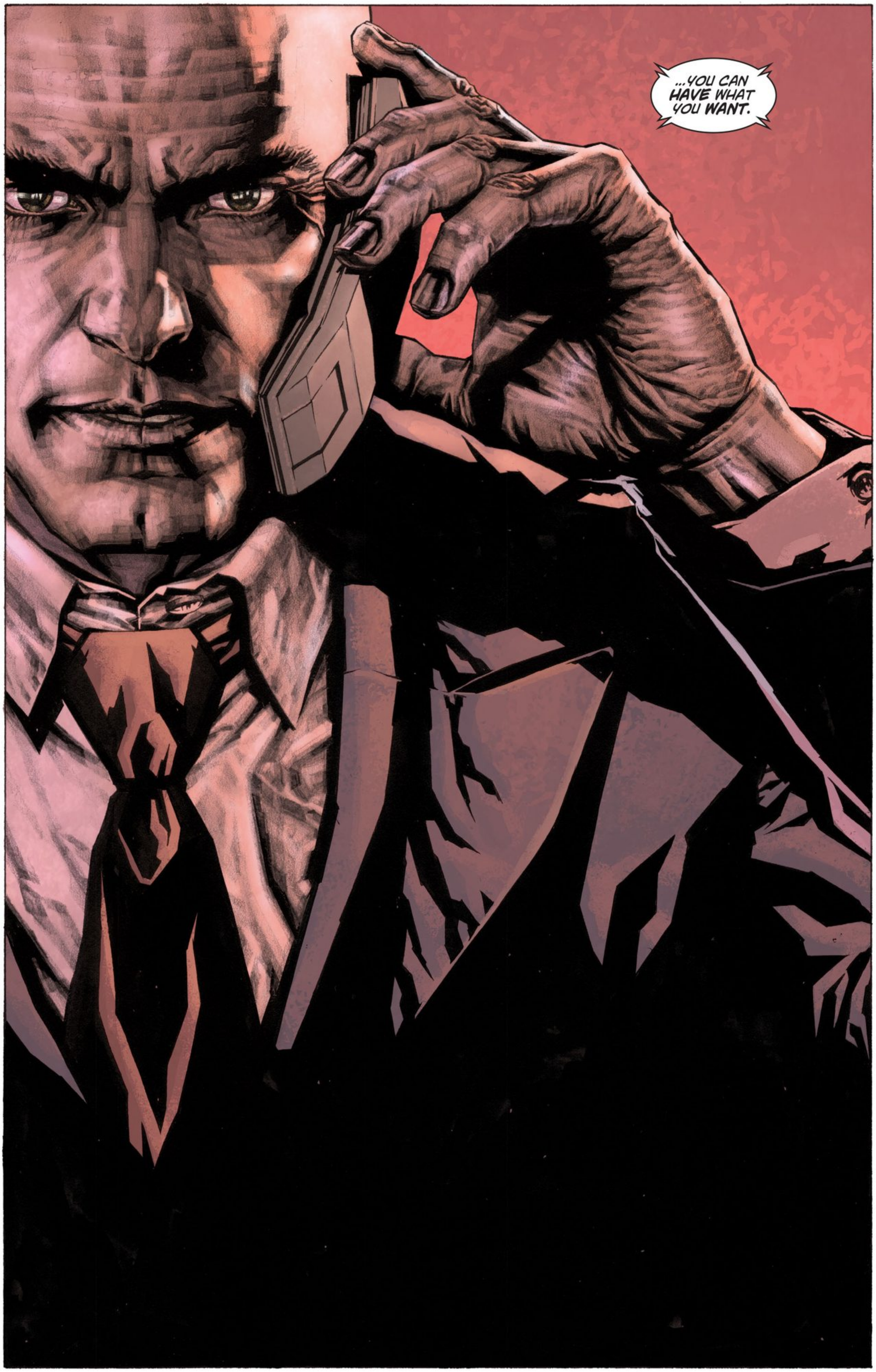
...THAT MATTERS.

BRRING BRRING

HELLO.

LEX?

BRUCE WAYNE HERE...


...YOU CAN HAVE WHAT YOU WANT.

...LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS, LEX LUTHOR!

BEFORE I THANK YOU FOR COMING, I'D LIKE TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE UNORTHODOX VENUE...

I HEARD THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE THAT SOME OF YOU MAY BE AFRAID OF *HEIGHTS*...

LEXCORP BUILDING OUR TOMORROW

LEXCORP BUILDING OUR TOMORROW

LEXCORP BUILDING OUR TOMORROW

LEXCORP BUILDING OUR TOMORROW

BUT BELIEVE ME, THERE'S *NOTHING* TO FEAR UP HERE IN THE CLOUDS, FOR IT'S WHERE *YOUR*--AND MY *OWN*--*FUTURE* LIES.

HUMANKIND IS A SPECIES THAT--FAULTS AND ALL--*DEFIANTLY* REACHES *HIGHER.*

SOME OF YOU MAY THINK THAT'S BECAUSE IT'S A LADDER WE'RE *CLIMBING.* OTHERS BELIEVE IT'S TO RETURN FROM *WHERE* WE *CAME.*

BUT WHATEVER DOCTRINE YOU INDIVIDUALLY SUBSCRIBE TO, THE QUEST FOR THE CLOUDS IS ONE WE *ALL* MUST *SHARE.*

ALL OF US. EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD--WE MUST STRIVE TO MAKE TODAY BETTER THAN YESTERDAY...

AND TOMORROW BETTER THAN ALL OF US.

THAT'S WHY I BUILT THIS SCIENCE SPIRE. I CONSIDER IT A RECORD OF WHAT WE AS A PEOPLE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED, AND OF WHAT'S YET TO COME.

EVERY FLOOR IS DEDICATED TO OUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENTS. FROM PICKING UP A BONE, TO...

WHO KNOWS? BECAUSE WE ARE NOT DONE. AND THIS BUILDING WON'T BE EITHER. THE TOP FLOORS WILL BE LEFT AS YOU SEE THEM NOW...

...WAITING, FOR YOU, TO FINISH THEM.

I NEED SOMEONE FROM AMONG YOU TO RAISE THE SPIRE, WHICH IS ONLY A *FOUNDATION.*

I BELIEVE, IN MY HEART, THAT YOU *WILL.* I *BELIEVE* IN *HUMANITY.* AND I BELIEVE THAT I AM *EXACTLY* LIKE YOU.

I BELIEVE THAT WE MUST *CONTROL* OUR *OWN DESTINY.*

I BELIEVE IN A *HIGHER POWER.*

I BELIEVE THAT WE NEED A *BOOST* FROM EACH OTHER TO REACH THE CLOUDS.

I BELIEVE THAT'S *WHY* I WAS PUT ON THIS EARTH. AND I BELIEVE THAT LEXCORP GIVES YOU...

HOPE.

HOPE

IT'S BEEN NEARLY A MONTH SINCE HER DEBUT, BUT IN THAT SHORT SPAN SHE'S CAPTURED NOT JUST THE **IMAGINATION**, BUT THE **HEART** OF METROPOLIS.

CYNICS LIKE CLARK KENT HAVE POINTED OUT THAT THIS MAY BE DUE TO WHAT HE PHRASED AS "THE **SELLING** OF A HERO" BUT THAT'S LIKE DISMISSING A SILVER LINING IN FAVOR OF THE GREY CLOUD.

MAYBE I SHOULD BUY THE DAILY PLANET AND **FIRE** HIM. CERTAINLY THERE ARE OTHERS IN MY POSITION THAT **CONTROL** THE MEDIA.

INSECURE MEN, IGNORANTLY SEEKING TO TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO THINK.

BUT WHAT WE THINK, I'VE LEARNED, IS SECONDARY...

...TO WHAT WE FEEL. WE ARE NOT MACHINES...

WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS. AND OUR INTELLECT, FOR BETTER OR WORSE...

BDEEP BDEEP

MAYBE IF YOU TURNED THE *HEAT* DOWN...

REALLY?

MONA, DO YOU THINK IT'S *HOT* IN HERE?

SEEMS *CHILLY* TO ME...

LEX... THERE'S A *FIRE.*

I SHOULD GO.

I'LL PUT IT OUT, AND COME BACK.

JUST COME BACK.

LEX, CAN I TALK FREELY?

I SIGN YOUR CHECKS, MONA.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT *I* THINK ABOUT THIS?

NO.

HERE'S WHAT YOU THINK: "MY BOSS IS GETTING DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO MAKING A MISTAKE THAT COULD ***RUIN*** HIM. HE'S BEEN ***TOUCHED*** BY AN ***IDEAL,*** WHEN ALL I WANT IS FOR HIM TO ***TOUCH ME.***"

"DESPITE THE WAY I DRESS, HE ***WON'T*** NOTICE ME. HE ONLY HAS EYES FOR HIS IDEAL. ***HOW*** CAN I CHANGE THAT? HOW CAN I MAKE MYSELF...

...IDEAL?"

YOU'RE A ***BASTARD.***

NO, MONA...

I'M AN ***IDEALIST.***

...SO HELP ME.

WINSLOW SNOT?

IT'S SCHOTT.

WHAT IS?

MY LAST NAME.

MORE LIKE YOUR WHOLE FREAKIN' *LIFE*, YOU ASK ME.

I *DIDN'T*.

SO, MR. ORR, IS IT? ANY-ONE EVER TELL YOU THAT YOU LOOK LIKE A *PORN* STAR?

NOT WHILE I HAD MY *CLOTHES* ON, NO.

AND, AREN'T A TAD *OLD* FOR WHAT FLOATS *YOUR* LITTLE *TOY BOAT*?

I COULDN'T *HELP* MYSELF. THAT'S IN THE *PAST*, THOUGH.

I'M... SEEING A COUNSELOR AND TAKING MEDICATION NOW.

C'MON WINSLOW, WE BOTH KNOW *THAT'S*...

S'NOT TRUE.

THERE'S BEEN SOME CUT-BACKS IN SOCIAL PROGRAMS.

EVEN NEEDED ONES.

WHAT'S THIS?

THE JOB I PROMISED.

I DIDN'T PROMISE I'D *DO* IT.

NO, BUT YOU JUST COULDN'T HELP YOURSELF COMING TO SEE WHAT IT IS.

INTERESTING.

THIS ALL CHECKS OUT?

EVERY *SPARKLING* BIT OF IT.

I'D NEED SOME UPFRONT--

--YOU GOT IT.

WHAT'S MY SHARE?

A GENEROUS THIRTY-FIVE.

MAKE IT A MORE GENEROUS FORTY.

NO.

GIVE ME A COUPLE DAYS. I'LL BE--

--I'LL SEE YOU, AFTER THE JOB. THE WHEN AND WHERE IS IN THE FILE.

HAVE FUN, MAN TOY.

IT'S TOYMAN.

BULL SCHOTT IT IS.

...HER Q-RATING IS THROUGH THE ROOF.

I MEAN, HOPE COULD SELL CONDOMS TO NUNS.

THERE'S A MARKET WE HAVEN'T PLUNGED INTO...

LEX, THE PUBLIC LOVES-- AND I MEAN TO THE POINT OF DEVOTION-- LOVES HER.

MY FAVORITE PLACE TO EAT? OH, YOU'RE GONNA HATE ME, BUT...

...PINEAPPLE KING.

PINEAPPLE KING? I LOVE THAT PLACE!!! THE CHILI-DOG--

WITH BROWN MUSTARD, BANANA PEPPERS AND ONIONS?

DON'T FORGET THE LEMONADE!

FORGET? MY FATHER TOOK ME WHEN I WAS FIVE AND I WAS HOOKED--THE BEST PLACE IN THE CITY!

WELL, DO ME A FAVOR-- DON'T TAKE THE JUSTICE LEAGUE THERE WHEN THEY COME RECRUITING OR THE LINES WILL BE DOWN THE BLOCK!

OH, I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT HAPPENING.

WRAPPED AROUND THE BLOCK!

NO, REGGIE, I MEAN ABOUT **ME** JOINING THE JUSTICE LEAGUE...

I'M A METROPOLIS GIRL--BORN AND RAISED...

THERE ARE PLENTY OF HEROES IN THIS COUNTRY, AND WE'RE ALL BLESSED TO HAVE THEM...

BUT MY **HEART** BELONGS TO **THIS** CITY. IT'S MY **HOME**-- IT'S **OUR** HOME...

...I WON'T **EVER** LEAVE HER.

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, HOPE...

METROPOLIS IS **BLESSED** TO HAVE YOU.

INDEED WE **ARE.**

THE SCIENCE SPIRE? IS EVERYTHING ON SCHEDULE?

YES SIR.

OPENING DAY IS SET FOR TWO WEEKS.

TWO WEEKS...

...A LIFETIME.

HELLO WIN-WIN-WIN-

--SSSSLOW.

HMMPH

ZZZT

HELLO WINSLOW! CAN WE PLAY A GAME?

WHY OF COURSE, DOLLY. JUST LET ME MAKE A FEW MORE ADJUST--

NOK NOK

Thought this could make your job easier--Plastic narcotics I picked up during a vacation to Russia. Once ignited, goes air born. good night nurse.

Orv--

P.S. I know a couple of orphanages in the Philippines, no questions asked if you got the $$$

IT SPINS, THE WORLD.

A LONG DAY BECOMES NIGHT, AND NIGHT...

BECOMES LONGING.

AND THEN...

A LIFETIME...

ALONE.

IT SADDENS ME, WHAT I'M FORCED TO BE.

AND YET, I CAN'T BE ANYTHING ELSE.

THAT REALIZATION... SUFFOCATING...

I OWE TO THE SPINNING WORLD.

THE AIR FEELS... **PROMISING** THIS MORNING. IT'S BEEN A BIT COOL IN METROPOLIS THE PAST FEW WEEKS, BUT THE WARM BREEZE BLOWING IN FROM THE WEST SEEMS TO BE...

A WIND OF **CHANGE.**

YOUR MONEY'S NO GOOD HERE, MR. LUTHOR.

I DON'T HEAR *THAT* VERY OFTEN.

JUST A COUPLE MORE DAYS 'TIL THAT BUILDING OF YOURS OPENS, HUH?

I WOULDN'T CALL THE SCIENCE SPIRE JUST A ***BUILDING...***

OH NO SIR, I DIDN'T MEAN NOTHING ***DISRESPECTFUL*** LIKE THAT--HELL, ME'N EVERY OTHER BUSINESSMAN IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD IS LOOKING FORWARD TO THAT BEAUTY--GONNA HAVE A REAL ***POSITIVE*** EFFECT ON US.

PERSONALLY? MEANS A ***LOT.***

YES **SHE** DOES.

STEIN
JEWELS
La Petit DAYCARE CENTER
SCHOOL BUS
NO...
Tossi
NO, YOU FAT BAG A PUS...
DON'T EVEN COME NEAR ME.
OKAY, AND I WON'T SAY YOU FELT THE NEED TO CHECK UP ON ME. BUT I'M A PROFESSIONAL. JUST LIKE *YOU*.
LIKE *ME*?
I DON'T. BUT THAT PACKAGE YOU SENT...
I NEVER...
IT MAKES THIS JOB A WALK IN THE PARK.

DESPITE MY **STANDING,** I FEEL THE NEED TO WALK THIS CITY EVERY DAY TO KEEP MY FEET CONNECTED TO ITS GROUND.

HANDY DANDY

I OWE IT **THAT** MUCH, MUCH LIKE THE OTHERS THAT WALK IT, OWE IT...

...TO ME.

BRUM

9 AV.
W 35 S
JESUS...
OH MY GOD.
WALK
ONE WAY
MR. LUTHOR...
GET IN THE CAR, PLEASE.

MONA, TELL ME SOMETHING.

JUST LISTEN.

--WHAT YOU'RE SEEING NOW IS EXCLUSIVE FOOTAGE FROM OUR NEWS CENTRAL FOUR TRAFFIC COPTER, OF AN **EXPLOSION** THAT ROCKED METROPOLIS JUST SECONDS AGO.

UNCONFIRMED REPORTS SAY THE BLAST OCCURRED AT ISAACSON AND STEIN JEWELERS, A GEM IMPORTER IN THE WALKER PARK NEIGHBORHOOD.

AND--

AND THERE'S METROPOLIS'S HOPE DIVING INTO THE DEVASTATION.

AND **HOPE** IS SOMETHING WE **NEED**, IF REPORTS ARE TRUE THAT THE JEWELER SHARED THE BUILDING WITH...

47-88

...A CHILDREN'S DAYCARE CENTER.

--THIS DRAMATIC FOOTAGE WAS SHOT EARLIER TODAY, FROM WHAT I CAN ONLY DESCRIBE AS HELL.

LIKE YOU'VE BEEN THERE...

GIMME ANOTHER.

YOU EVER SHOOT A TEDDY BEAR?

DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF OUR **HEROES**--AND I'M TALKING HERE OF THE ONES OUR **TAXES** SUPPORT--

TWENTY-SIX ADULTS--

AND AHEM-- **SIXTY-EIGHT CHILDREN** LOST THEIR LIVES.

LET'S NOT EVEN TALK ABOUT THE INJURED AT THIS POINT.

AMEN. INJURIES? THEY DON'T MAKE THE ***NEWS***. ALL THEY DO...

"...IS **LESSEN** THE **DRAMA.**"

--POLICE AND THE FBI HAVE RELEASED THIS SECURITY VIDEO TAPE, WHICH MAY--AND I'M FORCED TO REPEAT--**MAY**--SHOW THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRIME THAT HAS SHAKEN METROPOLIS TO IT'S **FOUNDATION.**

HIS NAME IS WINSLOW SCHOTT, A HIGH PROFILE THIEF...

...AND REGISTERED PEDOPHILE, BETTER KNOWN...

...AS THE **TOYMAN.** AT THIS REPORTING...

...HIS WHEREABOUTS ARE **UNKNOWN.**

THOSE **POOR** PARENTS...

EXCUSE ME?

THE MOTHERS AND THE FATHERS. THE ONES WHO LOST THEIR CHILDREN. I CAN ONLY ***IMAGINE*** HOW THEY MUST **FEEL.**

AND HOW'S ***THAT?***

HOPELESS?

YOU ***IMAGINE*** YOU CAN ***IMAGINE,*** BUT HONEY?

YOU ***CAN'T.***

YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M BEING ***PRESUMPTUOUS.***

NO, YOU ***IMAGINE*** YOU ***IMAGINE*** YOU ARE.

B-DRING B-DRING

LIKE A HOUSE OF CARDS **COLLAPSING,** ONE BY ONE, THE PIECES FALL INTO PLACE...

...AND I'M LEFT WITH A LIFETIME IN MY HANDS, UNFULFILLED.

THE "SELLING OF A HERO," MR. KENT?...

...MORE LIKELY, THE "SELLING-OUT" OF ONE.

SASHA FEDEROV AND HIS WIFE WERE DROPPING THEIR CHILDREN AT DAYCARE THIS MORNING WHEN THE EXPLOSION OCCURRED...

THE ENTIRE FAMILY IS DEAD.

MONA, PLEASE MAKE THE ARRANGEMENTS.

I'LL GET ON IT--

--NOW.

I HAVE TO FIND THE TOYMAN...

YES, YOU WILL.

BUT THAT HAS TO WAIT.

WHAT MONA WAS SAYING...

HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?

LIKE BECAUSE OF MY ABILITIES, I'M LESS THAN A WOMAN.

HOPE...

YOU ARE NOT A WOMAN...

YOU ARE SOMETHING MORE.

I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU, *TOO.*

THOSE WORDS, HOPE, MEAN THE **WORLD** TO ME...

THIS JUST IN...

WHAT'S BEING CALLED AN **ANONYMOUS** TIP CONCERNING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE MAN ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR A BRUTAL CRIME DIRECTED AGAINST NOT ONLY EVERY MAN AND WOMAN...

...BUT TRAGICALLY, **CHILD**, IN METROPOLIS HAS TURNED **FATAL** FOR SOME WHO HAVE SWORN TO PROTECT IT...

THIS IS LIVE FOOTAGE FROM A SOUTHSIDE METROPOLIS NEIGHBORHOOD, WHERE IT IS BELIEVED THAT POLICE ATTEMPTED TO ARREST WINSLOW SCHOTT--THE TOYMAN--IN CONNECTION WITH TODAY'S GRISLY **BOMBING** OF A DOWNTOWN DAYCARE CENTER...

ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM EMS CREWS AT THE SITE, **NONE** OF THE OFFICERS SURVIVED.

LEX...

GO.

HOPE...

EVERY EYE IN METROPOLIS WANTS TO SEE YOU BRING THIS MONSTER TO JUSTICE...

ALL I ASK IS TO SEE YOU *LATER*. MEET ME ATOP THE SCIENCE SPIRE.

I **FEEL** HER SMILE IN MY **CORE**. HER **RESPONSIBILITY** BELONGS TO THIS **CITY**. BUT HER **HEART**...

IT'S ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS IN LIFE THAT I PRAY WILL BE **UNFORGETTABLE.**

KNOCK KNOCK

COME IN.

I HAD THE FEDEROVS' BODIES RELEASED FROM THE MORGUE AND TRANSFERRED--

OH.

HAND ME MY ROBE, WOULD YOU PLEASE, MONA?

SOMETHING ***WRONG?***

I GAVE SASHA FEDEROV MY ***WORD*** THAT HIS FAMILY WOULD BE ***SAFE*** IN METROPOLIS.

IS THERE ANYTHING *ELSE?*

JUST, UM...

...MY LETTER OF *RESIGNATION.*

SEE YOU IN THE MORNING, MONA.

GOODNIGHT, MR. LUTHOR.

MR. ORR?

WHAT DO *YOU* WANT?

TO *THANK* YOU.

GO TO *HELL*...

I HAVE *OTHER* PLANS.

FROM DAY ONE, YOU *PLAYED* ME, LUTHOR.

I *PAID* YOU, ORR.

IF THE COST OF THE JOB WAS *HIGHER* THAN YOU ANTICIPATED, PERHAPS WE CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT. WHY DON'T YOU COME BY THE TOWER?

BELIEVE ME, I'D *LOVE* TO, BUT I'M IN NO SHAPE TO DRIVE...

REALLY? THEN I'LL SEND A CAR.

DON'T BOTHER.

IT'S ALREADY ON THE WAY.

LIKE A HOUSE OF CARDS....

DAMN IT...

WHAT'S **REAL**, **CAN'T** BE ARGUED WITH. THERE ARE CHEMICAL REASONS THAT HAPPEN ON A MOLECULAR LEVEL THAT MAKE GRASS **APPEAR** TO BE GREEN...

UNLESS ONE IS COLOR BLIND...

TAKING THAT INTO CONSIDERATION...

...ISN'T **PERCEPTION MORE REAL** THAN **REALITY** ITSELF?

HOTEL

I CAN'T CHANGE THE COLOR OF GRASS...

...BUT CAN I CHANGE THE WAY IT'S PERCEIVED?

I BELIEVE I CAN.

WITH YOUR HELP...

"WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO DO, WINSLOW?"

"DOLLY..."

DOLLY, DOLLY, DOLLY...

THERE ARE *BAD* MEN OUTSIDE...

I NEED YOU TO BE *BRAVE.*

I'LL GO OUTSIDE THEN.

GENERAL WINSLOW!

YES CAPTAIN SPAULDING?

MY MEN ON THE ROOF REPORT INCOMING-- FROM *TWO* DIRECTIONS!

TWO? NO, NO, NO...

THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN. IT WAS JUST A ROBBERY...I *LOVE* CHILDREN.

WINSLOW...

THANK YOU, SPAULDING. I'M OKAY NOW.

TELL YOUR MEN, *RED* AND *BLUE*.

RED AND *BLUE*. THEY'LL *KNOW* WHAT TO *DO*...

THEY'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'LL DO...

...BECAUSE YOU'VE MADE IT CLEAR WHAT YOU **WON'T.**

AS HARD AS IT IS TO BELIEVE...

...YOUR **ARROGANCE** MAY ACTUALLY BE **GREATER** THAN YOUR **ABILITIES.**

YOU **PROFESS** A **LOVE** OF HUMANITY, BUT THAT IS AN EMOTION YOU **CAN'T POSSIBLY** KNOW...

...BECAUSE THOSE SAME ABILITIES MAKE IT **IMPOSSIBLE** FOR YOU TO KNOW ITS **OPPOSITE.**

IT'S SOMETHING THAT TODAY HAS ITS GRIP ON EVERY **HEART** IN METROPOLIS...

...FEAR.

RIGHT NOW, EVERY CITIZEN IN METROPOLIS IS GLUED TO THEIR TELEVISION, WANTING DESPERATELY FOR SOMEONE OF STRENGTH TO MAKE THAT **FEAR** GO **AWAY.**

AND LIKE AN **AVENGING ANGEL** SHE SWOOPS DOWN...

WINSLOW--ON HIS BEST DAY--WAS NOTHING BUT A PETTY CRIMINAL AND A FAILED HUMAN BEING.

I MADE HIM A MONSTER.

THIS CITY FEARS HIM, AND IT WATCHES, HOPING FOR ONE THING...

CLICK
JUSTICE.

A JUSTICE...

THAT AT THE LAST MOMENT...

...IS SNATCHED FROM THEM.

HOPE...

MY HOPE...

SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND. SHE THINKS...

...IT'S HER BODY THAT BETRAYS HER. IF ONLY...

SMACK

IF ONLY...

IF ONLY MY TEARS DIDN'T BRAND ME AS HER JUDAS.

BUT LIKE HIS ACTION...

MINE IS PREORDAINED AS WELL...

IF ONLY BY ME.

I CREATED HOPE.

WITH THE AID OF A MAN WHO FEARED FOR HIS FAMILY...

...AND A BOY IN LOVE WITH HIMSELF, I CREATED A MACHINE THAT IMAGINED IT WAS HUMAN.

POP

WRRR

I GAVE A **DREAM** A **FORM** I COULD TOUCH...

...AND I'VE DELIVERED HER TO AN ALTAR FOR AN ALIEN TO SACRIFICE.

AN ALIEN THAT HOLDS LIFE SACRED ABOVE ALL ELSE.

AN ALIEN THAT SEES NO LIFE IN HOPE.

BUT THEN, **HOPE** IS AN **ASPIRATION.**

A **BEACON** THAT SHINES **BRIGHTER** THAN ANY **STAR,** LIGHTING THE WAY FOR ALL **MANKIND.**

HOPE IS THE **REFUSAL** OF THE **INEVITABLE,** A HAND LIFTED TO THE CLOUDS.

HOPE IS WHAT MAKES US **HUMAN.** FOR WHEN REALITY THREATENS TO **DESTROY** US, WE REACH **INWARD...**

...AND **WE CREATE HOPE.**

IT'S THE **GREATEST** GIFT WE CAN **GIVE** EACH OTHER.

THOUGH, IT JUST MAY BE THE **FOUNDATION....**

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DETONATE_

...TO A HOUSE OF CARDS.

DAILY

EVEN THROUGH THE DUST...

I SEE YOUR EYES.

I KNOW OF ALL YOUR REMARKABLE "VISIONS," BUT LET ME TELL YOU WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE...

MY SOUL.

AND THERE'S NOT A SOUL IN METROPOLIS WHO WATCHED HOPE DROP THE MONSTER, AND GIVEN THE SAME OPPORTUNITY?

WOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT THEMSELVES.

NOT A SOUL.

HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL...

YOU ARROGANT ALIEN BASTARD?

YOUR *SILENCE* SPEAKS *VOLUMES...*

YOU UNDERSTAND MY WORDS, BUT YOU *REFUSE* TO *BELIEVE* WHAT THEY *MEAN.*

IS THAT BECAUSE YOU *SEE* SOMETHING IN HUMANITY THAT IN TRUTH *ISN'T THERE,* OR THAT YOU'RE *BLIND* TO WHAT TRULY *IS?*

SAY SOMETHING, *GODDAMNIT!*

YOU'RE WRONG...

I *CAN* SEE YOUR *SOUL.*

HOPE

WHUMP

WHUMP

NO...

YOU CAN'T. BECAUSE IF YOU COULD...

YOU WOULD SEE A MAN, WHO *WILLINGLY DENIED* HIMSELF *HAPPINESS...*

WHO CHOSE TO GIVE UP *HOPE...*

FOR THE *WORLD.*

A WORLD *WITHOUT* A *SUPERMAN.*

I KNOW I CAN'T BEAT YOU...

...ALONE.

BUT THEN, I'M NOT ALONE. THERE ARE SIX AND A HALF BILLION OF ME...

AND ONLY ONE OF YOU.

AND WE CAN DRIVE YOU BACK OUT TO THE BLACKNESS FROM WHICH YOU CAME.

WHAT THE WORLD WATCHED YOU DO TONIGHT...

IF IT ONLY CHANGES ONE MIND ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE...

PLEASE, JUST FLY AWAY...

WHAT GIVES MEASURE TO A MAN'S CHOICES...

...IS WHAT HE HAS TO GIVE UP TO MAKE THEM.

I AM A MAN.

I HOPE.

END

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

BENCHMARKS FROM BRIAN AZZARELLO AND LEE BERMEJO

Cover art for the original trade paperback collection of Lex Luthor: Man of Steel

LEX LUTHOR: MAN OF STEEL

Proposal by Brian Azzarello & Lee Bermejo

Lex Luthor is arguably one of the most recognized comic book characters in mainstream culture, as well as a very vital part of the Superman myth. Evil genius. Billionaire industrialist. Superman's archenemy.

But *who* is Lex Luthor? More important — *why* is Lex Luthor?

This is the essence of *Man of Steel*, a look at the Superman myth from Luthor's point of view — one that can't be as simply evil as it's been portrayed. I want to get at what motivates a man like Luthor — a self-made man who not only reached the mountaintop but maintains his lofty position there. The way the myth is structured now, Luthor feels threatened by Superman. But what if Luthor's actions are not based on his own personal insecurities, but on a recognition that Superman poses a threat to the world? What if Luthor's goal is not to bring Superman to his knees, but to save humanity before Superman brings it to *its* knees? What if Luthor understands that the only thing we have to prevent Superman from acting against humanity is his word? What if Luthor doesn't see the "man" part of Superman, but the alien? What if Luthor himself is a deeply religious man and sees Superman's status as a threat to the beliefs he shares with millions of people?

What if Luthor isn't motivated by petty evil, but by altruistic good?

That would make Lex Luthor an extremely complex, rich, *human* character. It would also present a different, compelling view of the last son of Krypton, one that hasn't been touched on yet. It's been said that in any story, the villains are the most interesting characters. Well, in this story — according to Luthor — Superman is the villain. This could bring some of the vitality back to the character that has been missing for years. He wouldn't behave any differently than he has in the past, but through Luthor's eyes, Superman's actions are not those of a hero but the whims of an unstoppable force that could destroy Metropolis as easily as he could pluck a falling plane out of the sky. What if we've just been lucky so far that we've stayed on his good side?

And what if Luthor loves the human race more than Superman appears to? So much so that he chooses to sacrifice someone he loves personally and deeply, someone who has brought him a happiness he never dreamed he'd experience. Someone who will be lost to him forever.

The tragedy of the story is that Luthor cannot ever bring Superman down. Luthor is only human. He realizes the best he can possibly do is open people's eyes, and change the way they look at Superman. Give them pause, and have them say "Maybe he's not perfect..."

That's all we can hope to do as well.

The original proposal for the five-issue Lex Luthor: Man of Steel *miniseries*

A

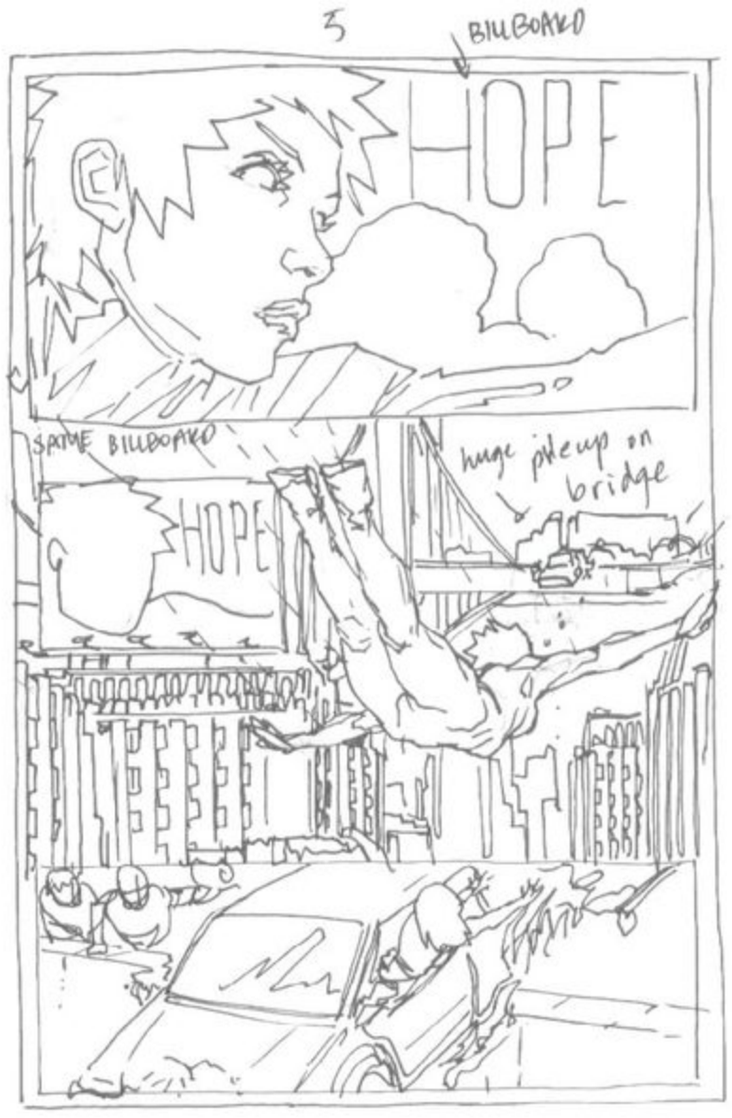
← WHITE BACKGROUND →

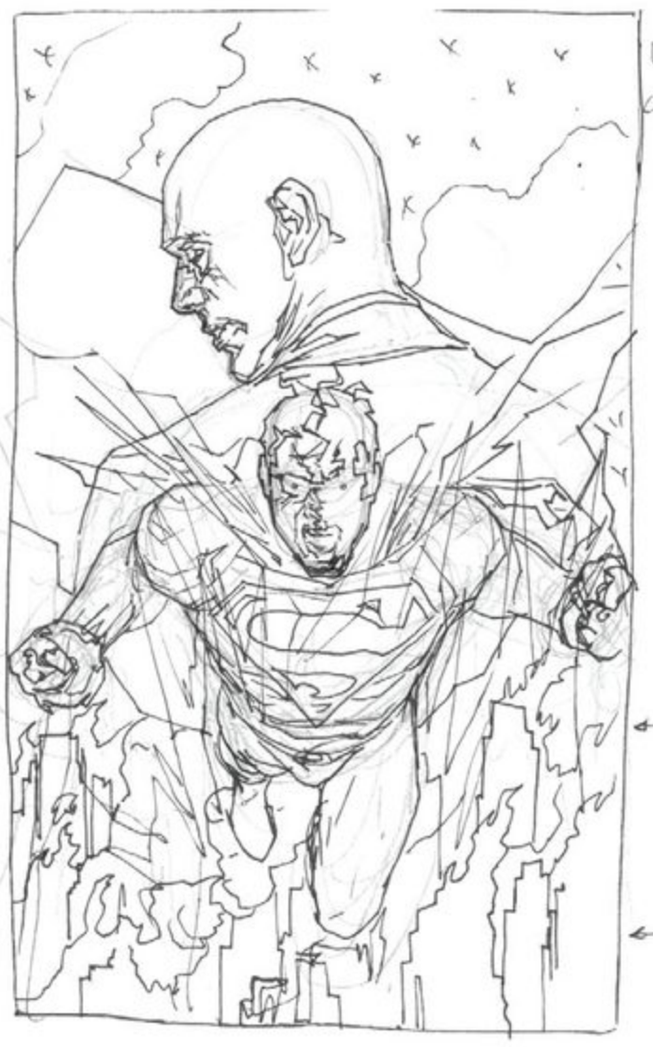
HOPE'S UNIFORM IS LIKE A SHINY SILVER, LATEX LIKE MATERIAL.

COLOR SCHEME...

- FIGURES A BURNT UMBER, OKANISH YELLOW.

B





LOGO SHOULD COVER HIS FACE

FOCUS SHOULD BE ON THE "S" SHIELD WITH LUTHOR'S REFLECTION AND THE CITY ON FIRE

~~ELITTED~~ THINK THE FIRST ISSUE COVER WITH MORE OF A WHOLE BODY SHOT OF LUTHOR

BURNING CITY →

Cover sketches for issues №4 and №5 of the miniseries and the original trade paperback collection

(1)

I WILL MOVE THE ENTIRE IMAGE DOWN ENOUGH FOR THE LOGO.

- BOTH GRAINY... SIMILAR IN TONE TO THE BATMAN/DEATHBLOW TBB

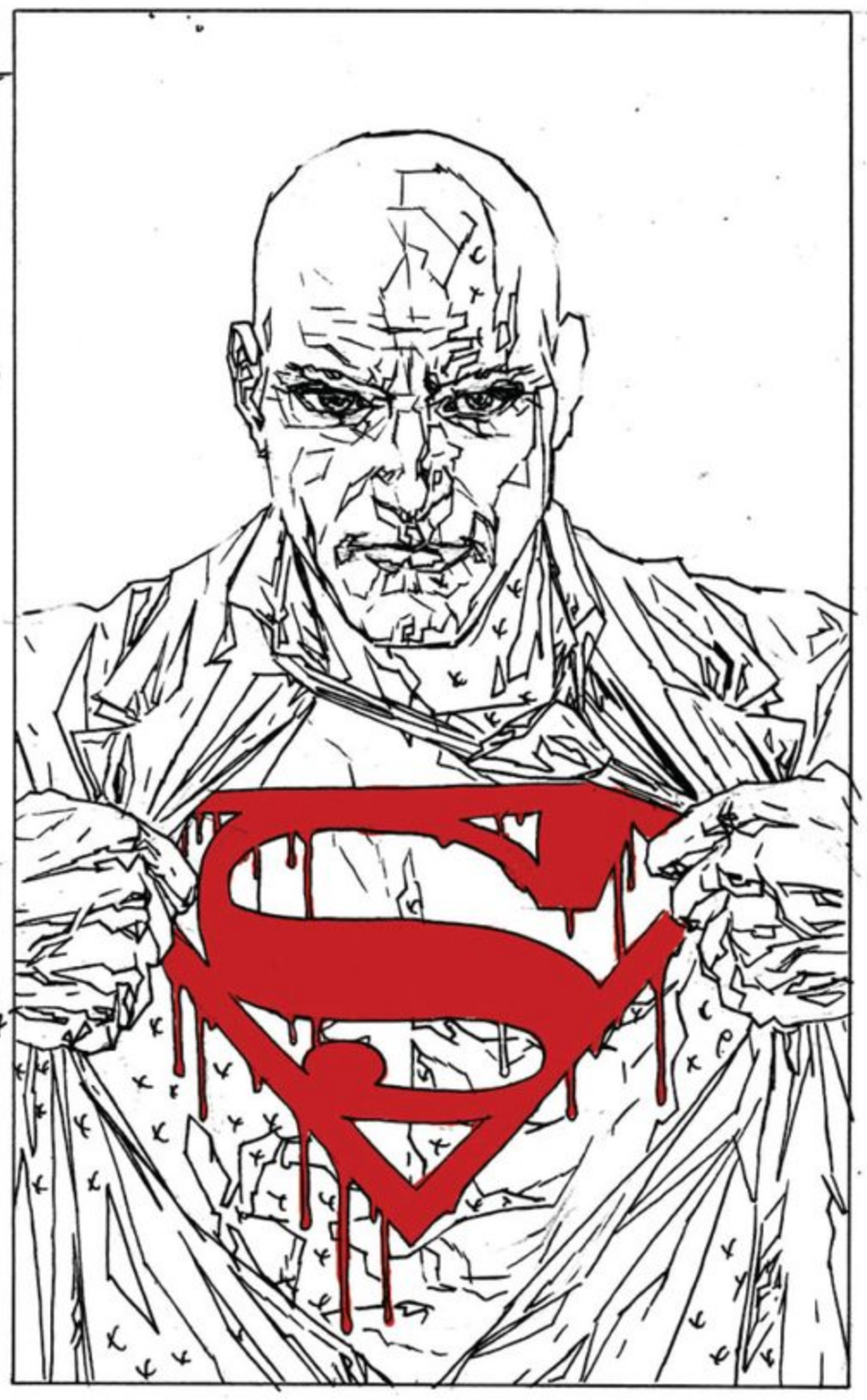
← BLACK & WHITE WITH RED EYES & RED & GOLD "S" SHIELD

BLACK & WHITE → WITH RED "DRIPPING" "S"

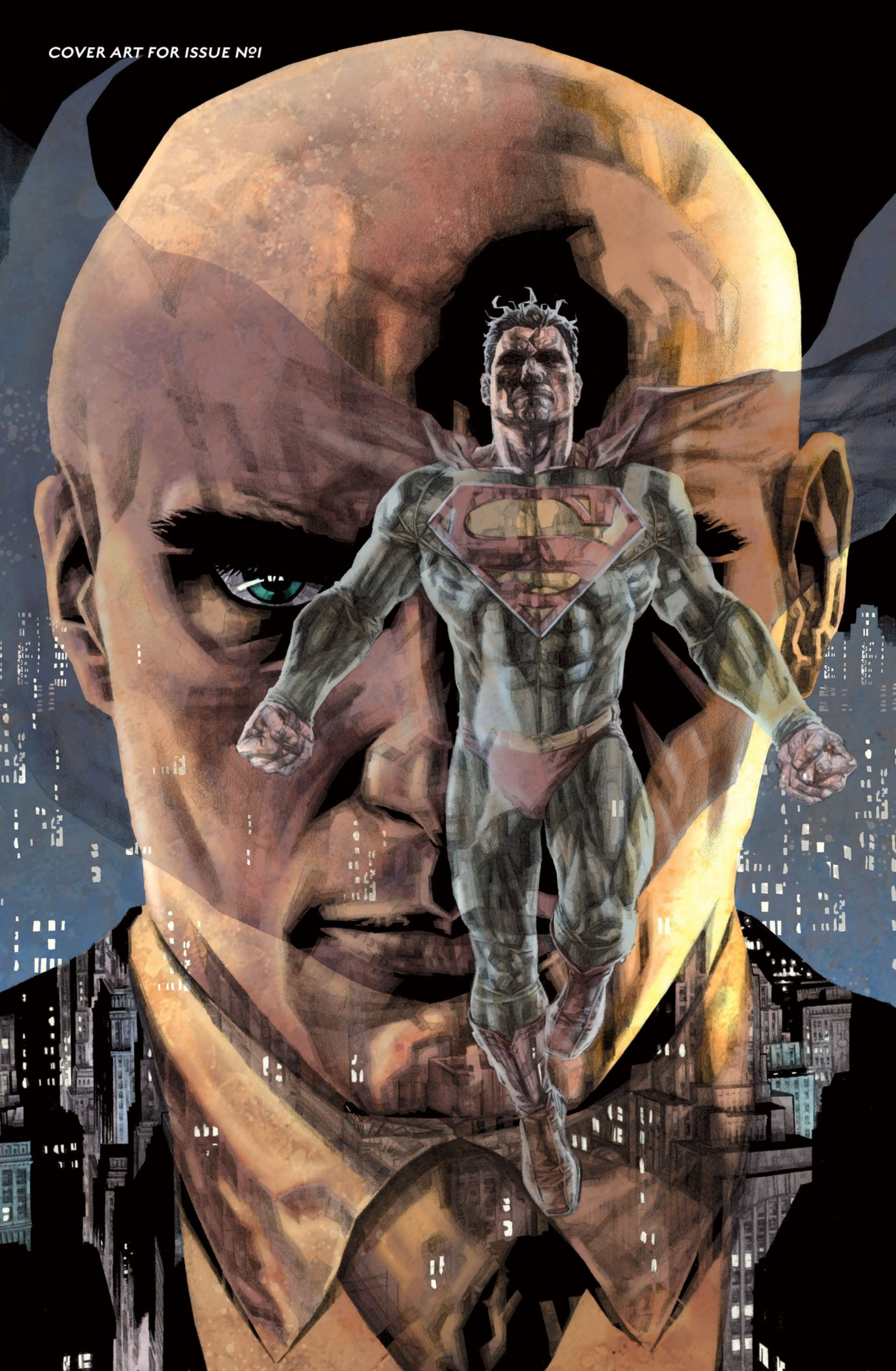
← THE LUTHOR FACE WOULD ALL BE IN COLOR & WOULD REALLY POP OUT WITH THE REST OF THE IMAGE IN BLACK & WHITE

- BOTH LOGOS WOULD BE RED

(2)



COVER ART FOR ISSUE №1



COVER ART FOR ISSUE №2

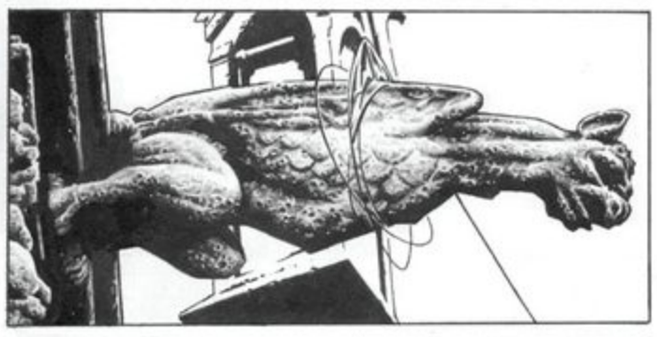
COVER ART FOR ISSUE №3

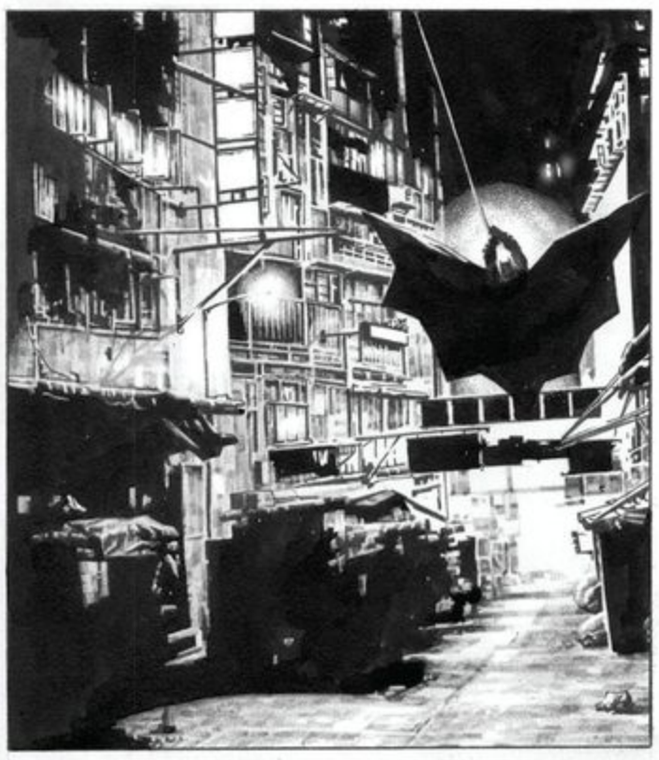
COVER ART FOR ISSUE №4

COVER ART FOR ISSUE №5

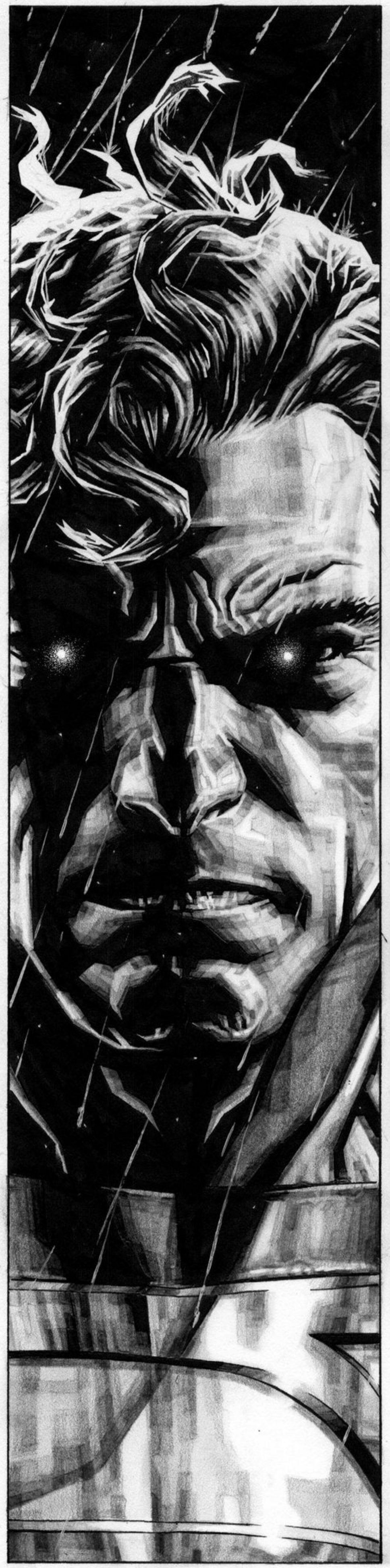
DESIGN FOR THE DAILY PLANET HEADQUARTERS

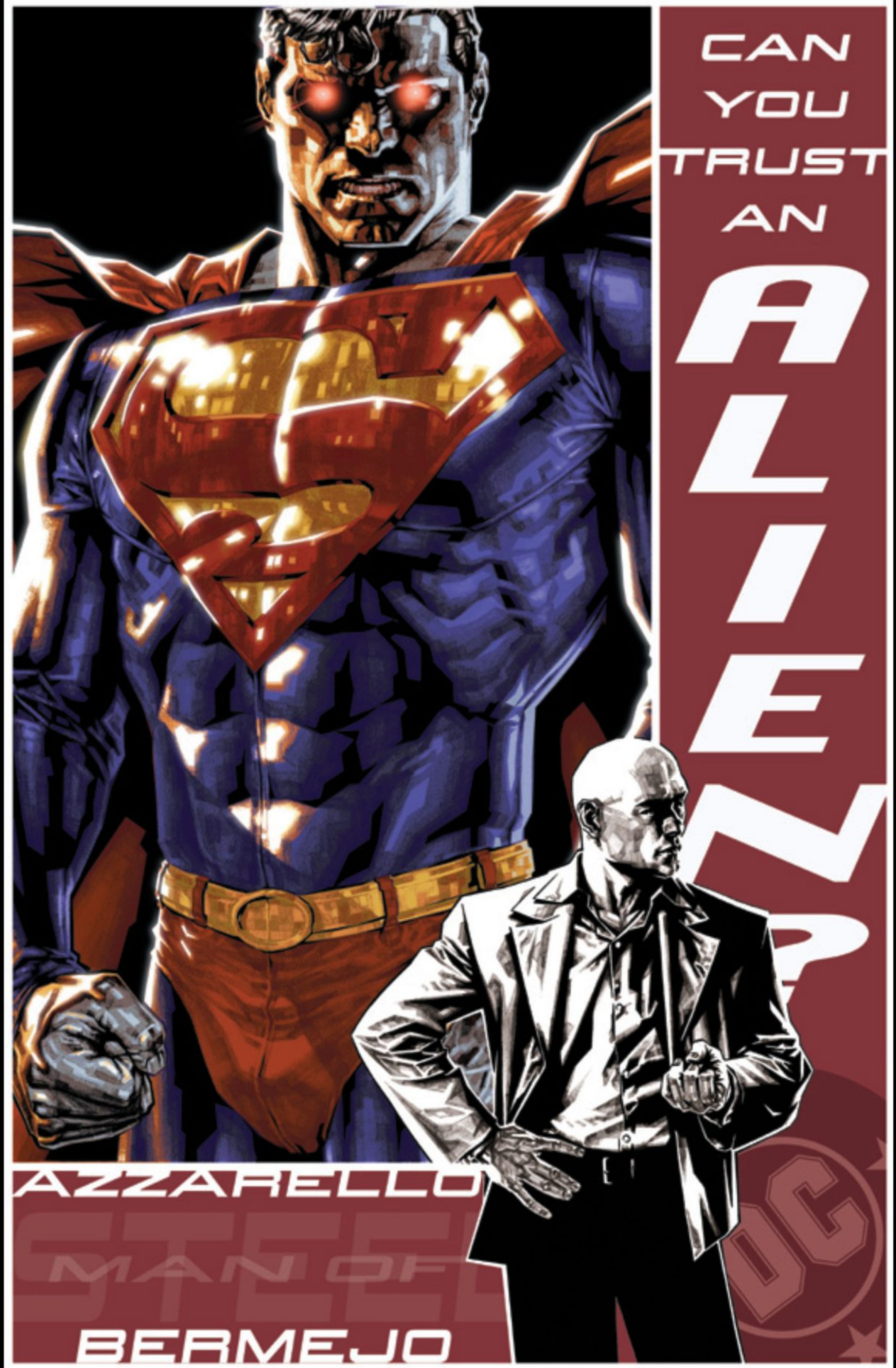
FINAL UNCOLORED ART FROM ISSUE №3





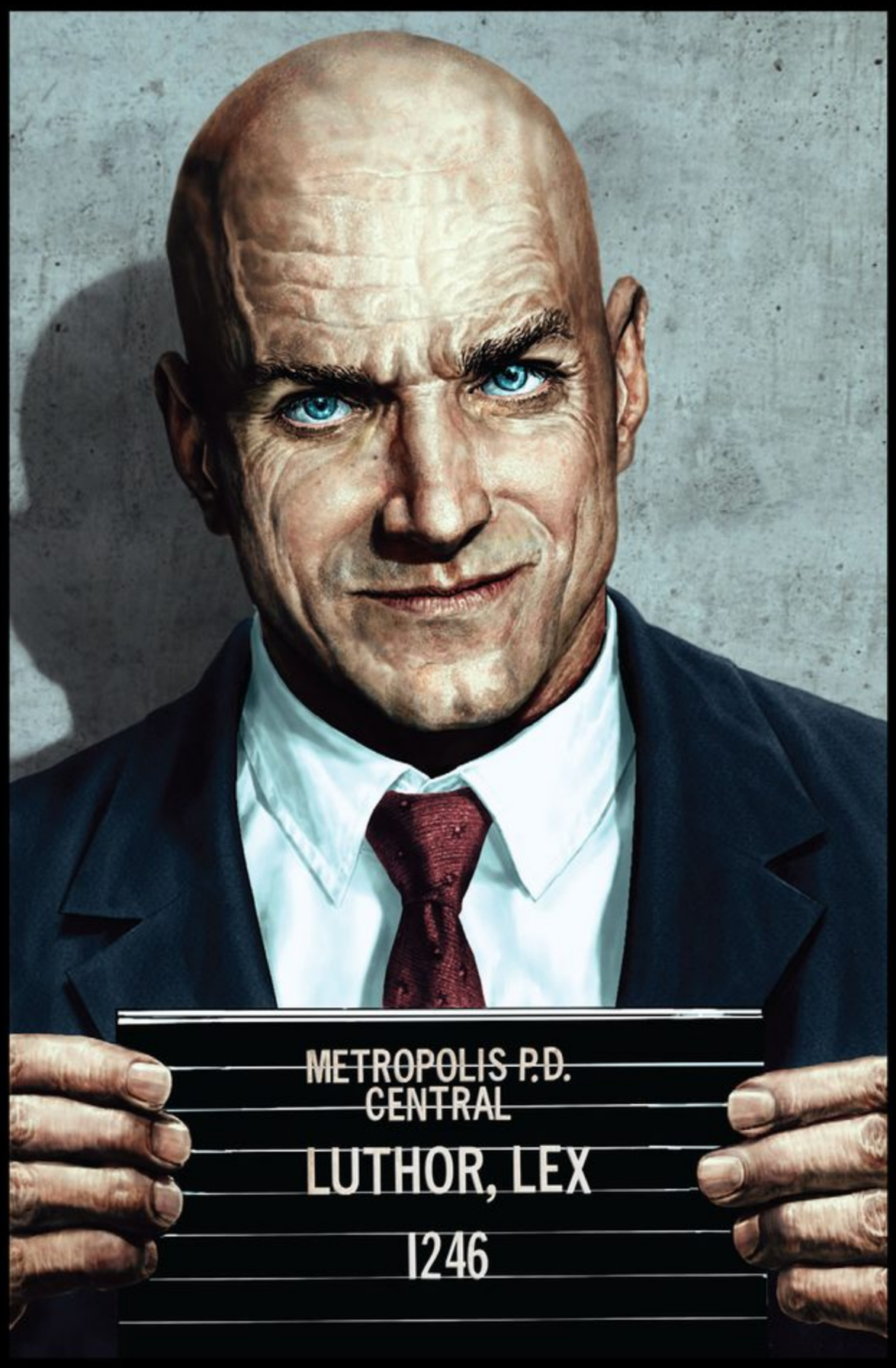
FINAL UNCOLORED ART FROM ISSUES №3 AND №4





PROMOTIONAL ART FOR THE MINISERIES

EARLY COVER DESIGNS FOR THE EXPANDED HARDCOVER COLLECTION OF THE MINISERIES



ABSOLUTE LUTHOR *SLIPCASE COVER*

Brian Azzarello has been writing comics professionally since the mid-1990s. He is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Batman*, *Jonny Double*, *Spaceman*, *Moonshine*, and the groundbreaking Harvey and Eisner award-winning series *100 Bullets*, all created in collaboration with artist Eduardo Risso. His other works include *Hellblazer* and *Loveless* (both with Marcelo Frusin), *Superman: For Tomorrow* (with Jim Lee), *Joker*, *Luthor*, *Before Watchmen: Rorschach*, and *Batman: Damned* (all with Lee Bermejo), a character-defining three-year run on *Wonder Woman* (with Cliff Chiang), as well as *Dark Knight III: The Master Race* (with Frank Miller and Andy Kubert). He hails from Chicago.

Award-winning artist **Lee Bermejo** is the illustrator of the graphic novels *Luthor*, *Batman/Deathblow*, *Before Watchmen: Rorschach*, and the *New York Times* bestsellers *Joker* and *Batman: Damned*, all of which were done in collaboration with writer Brian Azzarello.

Bermejo's other work for DC includes the titles *Global Frequency* (with Warren Ellis), *Superman/Gen 13* (with Adam Hughes), and *Hellblazer* (with Mike Carey), as well as several dozen painted covers. He also wrote and illustrated the bestselling graphic novels *Batman: Noël* and *Suiciders* for Vertigo. Bermejo lives and works in a small town in Italy.

"Azzarello (*100 Bullets*) paints a complex portrait of the villain as a committed humanist with a fiend lurking beneath, born of his pride in human achievement. It is masterfully abetted by the harsh realism of Bermejo's art, which, with the subtle shifting of shadow or a slight tilt of angle, can turn a supervillain into a human being and a superhuman savior into an alien monster."
—***Booklist***

WHEN I SEE YOU, I SEE SOMETHING NO MAN CAN EVER BE. I SEE THE END.

**THE END OF OUR POTENTIAL.
THE END OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS.
THE END OF OUR DREAMS.**

YOU ARE MY NIGHTMARE.

Superman has been called many things since he first appeared in the skies above Metropolis: the Man of Steel, the World's Greatest Hero—even the Big Blue Boy Scout. Now his oldest and most implacable foe has given him a new title: Humanity's Greatest Threat.

In this compelling study of the ultimate clash of wills, the *New York Times* bestselling and Eisner Award-winning team of writer **Brian Azzarello** and artist **Lee Bermejo** (*Batman: Damned*, *Joker*) opens the mind of Lex Luthor to reveal the true motivations behind his legendary animosity toward the Last Son of Krypton—as well as his ultimate plan to defeat his invulnerable adversary.

Suggested for Mature Readers
dccomics.com

SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"